



# The State of Immigration Reform

By Kristen Ellingboe and Anna Perina    December 2015



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# Introduction and summary

It is no secret that the racial and ethnic makeup of the American electorate is changing rapidly. By the 2016 election, communities of color will make up 32 percent of all eligible voters in the United States.<sup>1</sup> This increasingly rapid demographic change means politicians at every level of government must address with public policy the challenges and opportunities facing all Americans.

One of these challenges is the need for comprehensive immigration reform. The majority of Americans—69 percent—think unauthorized immigrants who are living in the United States should be allowed to stay in the country, according to a recent CBS News and *New York Times* poll.<sup>2</sup> Yet congressional lawmakers have failed to move forward on comprehensive immigration reform. The failure of lawmakers to prioritize a long-term solution to the challenges facing the U.S. immigration system means that more than 11 million unauthorized immigrants are forced to stay on the economic sidelines while families continue to be separated.<sup>3</sup>

Instead of providing a sensible solution that would give unauthorized immigrants legal status and a pathway to citizenship—the progressive approach to immigration reform, which would boost the economy—the conservative response frequently demonizes and attempts to criminalize immigrants, all while predominantly opposing any positive action altogether.<sup>4</sup>

This report details the current state of immigration reform by laying out the problems facing the unauthorized immigrant community, outlining the conservative response to the immigration system, reviewing progressive solutions for reform, and providing a state-by-state breakdown of the economic impact of comprehensive immigration reform.

# Problems caused by a lack of immigration reform

The failure to address the challenges of the immigration system has far-reaching consequences—not only for immigrant communities, but also for the nation overall. Overzealous immigration enforcement and hard-line deportation strategies are tearing families apart, affecting American citizens and legal migrants alike. Furthermore, without comprehensive immigration reform, millions of unauthorized workers are not able to fully participate in the economy, hurting those workers and their families, as well as the economy as a whole.

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## Separating families

One of the most immediate consequences of the current immigration system is the separation of immigrant families. Hardline immigration enforcement and deportation policies are breaking up millions of families and countless communities, leaving families struggling and immigrant communities living in a culture of fear.<sup>5</sup> When families are divided, many parents are forced to become single parents and struggle to make ends meet.<sup>6</sup> In even worse scenarios, U.S.-born children of unauthorized parents may be forced into foster care when their parents are deported.<sup>7</sup> In addition to physically separating families, these enforcement and deportation policies create a culture of fear of family separations among immigrant communities, which hurts police-community relationships and erodes trust.<sup>8</sup>

Over the past decade, aggressive deportation strategies have resulted in the removal and return of more than 3 million immigrants.<sup>9</sup> While the number of deportations has been dropping steadily over the past few years, nearly 316,000 immigrants were deported in fiscal year 2014 alone.<sup>10</sup> And currently, 16.6 million people live in mixed-status families—families with at least one unauthorized immigrant—and one-third of all U.S. children of immigrants live in these families.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, according to a 2013 estimate, unauthorized immigrant adults have been in the United States for a median time of almost 13 years. That means at least half of the entire unauthorized population has spent at least that long becoming involved in their communities and in the U.S. economy as a whole.<sup>12</sup>



Having citizen children or even being the primary breadwinner for citizen children, however, does not ensure protection from deportation. As of November 2014, 4.3 million people were waiting for family-based visas in the United States.<sup>13</sup> And according to Colorlines, 204,810 parents of U.S. children were removed from the country between July 1, 2010, and September 31, 2012.<sup>14</sup> The removal of those parents accounted for nearly 23 percent of all individuals deported during that period; that estimate is likely low, as many parents are reluctant to admit they have children in the country.<sup>15</sup> Family separations create stress and anxiety among immigrant communities, which takes a toll on the entire country.

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## Depriving the nation of economic gains

The failure to implement comprehensive immigration reform also deprives the nation of a needed economic boost. The millions of unauthorized immigrants who are currently living and working in the United States are already participating in the nation's economy. But the vast majority of unauthorized workers are not able to participate fully in the economic system. A comprehensive immigration reform plan that would allow everyone to work on an even playing field would also increase tax revenue and lead to higher wages for all workers. This would lead to better jobs and increased spending throughout the entire economy.

Unauthorized immigrants are already contributing to the economy by working and paying taxes, but comprehensive immigration reform would allow them to increase their contribution to the U.S. economy.<sup>16</sup> In 2012, the most recent year for which data are available, unauthorized immigrants paid an estimated \$11.84 billion in state property and sales taxes, which fund schools, police and fire stations, roads, and other public services.<sup>17</sup> Reforming the immigration system would only increase these contributions. By allowing unauthorized immigrants to earn legal status, their bargaining power would increase, and they would become better equipped to contest an unlawful termination of employment, negotiate for fair compensation, and file a complaint if they believe they are being mistreated or abused.<sup>18</sup> These worker protections would lead to higher wages for both immigrants and nonimmigrants, which would benefit all workers who are otherwise at risk of being undercut. The protections would spread throughout the entire economy, increasing tax revenue, expanding the nation's gross domestic product, or GDP, and creating jobs.<sup>19</sup> According to a 2013 analysis by the Center for American Progress, providing a pathway to citizenship for unauthorized immigrants would

result in an additional \$109 billion in taxes paid over 10 years.<sup>20</sup> A more recent analysis also found that creating a pathway to citizenship would increase U.S. GDP by \$1.2 trillion over 10 years, increasing the cumulative income of Americans by \$625 billion.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, under the current system, millions of unauthorized workers are already paying into Social Security and Medicare, supporting the aging U.S. population without reaping the benefits. And just as comprehensive immigration reform would benefit the entire economy, it also would lead to huge gains to Social Security and Medicare, helping support the solvency of both programs.<sup>22</sup>

Simply put, the failure to reform the immigration system is leaving money on the table. Allowing immigrants to work on an even playing field would allow them to contribute even more to the economy than they are already.

# Overview of the conservative response

Despite the negative consequences of inaction on immigration reform, political leaders have failed to advance sensible solutions for the nation's immigration system. At the federal level, congressional leaders have obstructed attempts to pass long-term comprehensive immigration reform, instead considering only piecemeal anti-immigrant bills.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, at the state level, conservative lawmakers have proposed measures to demonize local immigrant communities and obstruct the implementation of positive immigration reforms.<sup>24</sup>

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## Obstructing progress

In June 2013, the Senate passed a broadly supported, bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform bill: the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act, or S. 744.<sup>25</sup> The bill sought to modernize and reform the American immigration system by updating the legal visa system, making the largest investments in border security to date, and providing a pathway to citizenship for unauthorized immigrants. But despite the Senate's success, the House of Representatives failed to consider this historic bill or any other immigration reform plan.<sup>26</sup>

Since then, the progress for passing comprehensive immigration reform has stalled indefinitely. New House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) recently said in a series of interviews that he would not work with the Obama administration on immigration policy. "Look, I think it would be a ridiculous notion to try and work on an issue like this with a president we simply cannot trust on this issue," he said in an interview with CBS's "Face the Nation."<sup>27</sup> He also signed a letter promising members of his party that he would not bring immigration legislation to the House floor during this congressional session.<sup>28</sup>

Since former Rep. John Boehner (R-OH) took over as House Speaker in 2011, the immigration debate in Congress has centered on piecemeal legislation in the form of enforcement-only bills and attempts to stall the president's executive actions.<sup>29</sup>



In the absence of federal legislative action, President Barack Obama introduced executive actions on immigration in November 2014.<sup>30</sup> The immigration directives include expanding Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, and introducing Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents, or DAPA. These two actions would give more than 5 million unauthorized individuals temporary legal protections, shielding them from deportation and allowing those with no criminal record to work legally in this country.<sup>31</sup> Congress has attempted to block the implementation of the president's directives numerous times since their introduction.<sup>32</sup> In December 2014, Speaker Boehner presided over a vote on a bill sponsored by Rep. Ted Yoho (R-FL) that would make the president's executive action "null and void and without legal effect."<sup>33</sup> A February 2015 proposal by Rep. Trey Gowdy (R-SC) would strip funding for President Obama's immigration directives and allow states to suspend implementation of the programs.<sup>34</sup> And in March 2015, House Republican leaders tried unsuccessfully to stall the rollout of expanded DACA and DAPA by cutting funding for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.<sup>35</sup>

At the same time that congressional leaders are blocking progress, conservative state lawmakers have mounted legal challenges against President Obama's immigration directives in the federal court system. Immediately after the announcement of the deferred action programs in November 2014, a coalition of 17 states—now up to 26 states—filed a lawsuit requesting that U.S. District Judge Andrew Hanen from Texas block implementation of the executive actions.<sup>36</sup> Judge Hanen held in their favor and ordered the injunction, putting the implementation of DAPA and expansion of DACA on hold.<sup>37</sup> In November 2015, a federal appeals court based in New Orleans upheld the injunction from the lower court, dealing a major blow to immigrant advocates and mixed-status families across the nation.<sup>38</sup> The U.S. Department of Justice has since appealed this decision to the Supreme Court.<sup>39</sup>

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## Pursuing restrictionist policies

In addition to obstructing progress on immigration reform, conservative lawmakers in Washington and the states have actively supported draconian policies that make life more difficult for the more than 11 million unauthorized immigrants living in the United States. These restrictionist measures would overtly target, criminalize, and threaten to deport millions of innocent immigrants who are living in the country, while giving them no opportunity to come forward and live within the law.

Here is a snapshot of some of these restrictionist policies:

- **Ending the practice of birthright citizenship:** The topic of birthright citizenship has become a renewed focus of immigration opponents in Congress; conservative lawmakers recently proposed policies that challenge the constitutional provision in the 14th Amendment that guarantees citizenship for all individuals who are born on American soil.<sup>40</sup> Rep. Steve King (R-IA) and Sen. David Vitter (R-LA) have separately introduced legislation in this session of Congress to end the practice—and House Republicans followed their lead by hosting a Judiciary Committee hearing in April 2015 titled “Birthright Citizenship: Is It the Right Policy for America?”<sup>41</sup> These efforts to repeal the birthright citizenship provision would undo a part of the U.S. Constitution—creating an explosion in the number of unauthorized immigrants along the way.<sup>42</sup> According to a 2010 Migration Policy Institute study, eliminating birthright citizenship for children with at least one unauthorized parent would increase the unauthorized population to 24 million by 2050, making millions of children stateless.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, ending birthright citizenship would force all new parents to go through the long and cumbersome process of proving their children’s citizenship, which could result in an effective birth tax of \$600 per child.<sup>44</sup> The guarantee of birthright citizenship has also faced challenges in the states. In October, a federal judge in Texas declined a request for a preliminary injunction to stop state officials from denying birth certificates to U.S.-born children of immigrants who are unable to supply certain forms of identification. While state officials do not have the legal authority to deny U.S. citizenship to children born in the country, refusing birth certificates to these children could deprive them of the rights and benefits that all citizens should enjoy.<sup>45</sup>
- **Defunding so-called sanctuary cities:** Conservative lawmakers in Congress and in local state governments are leading a recent wave of efforts to put an end to so-called sanctuary cities—cities with community trust policies that emphasize community safety and do not turn unauthorized immigrants over to federal immigration authorities for potential deportation proceedings.<sup>46</sup> Sen. Vitter recently introduced a bill that would punish these cities by cutting funding for critical law enforcement and economic development programs.<sup>47</sup> Stripping federal funding from states and cities that choose not to turn over unauthorized immigrants, however, could actually limit law enforcement agencies’ ability to provide assistance and respond to crimes.<sup>48</sup> Senate Democrats stopped this bill from moving forward.<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately, similar anti-immigrant tactics have

emerged in state legislatures as well. At the end of September, North Carolina state lawmakers passed a bill prohibiting cities in the state from passing community trust policies or sanctuary city ordinances.<sup>50</sup>

- **Criminalizing unauthorized immigrants:** Congressional hard-liners have proposed legislation that would turn millions of unauthorized immigrants into criminals overnight, simply by virtue of their lack of immigration status. The Michael Davis, Jr. in Honor of State and Local Law Enforcement Act, introduced by Rep. Gowdy in February 2015, would make being unauthorized a crime rather than a civil offense, which would require that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security detain any immigrant picked up by local authorities and put immigrants at higher risk of imprisonment and deportation.<sup>51</sup> An analysis by the Center for American Progress, however, shows that a massive deportation strategy would only hurt the American economy. Deportation costs an average of \$10,070 per person—for a total of \$114 billion to remove the entire unauthorized population.<sup>52</sup> Aside from the high costs to physically deport millions of individuals, mass deportation would devastate the national economy, threatening to shrink the labor force by 6.4 percent over two decades and decrease the U.S. GDP by up to \$1.6 trillion.<sup>53</sup>
- **Securing the American border with a wall:** The idea of building a wall to secure the U.S. border has become a trademark of many anti-immigrant strategies. Conservatives in the House of Representatives introduced legislation in both 2014 and 2015 to enhance operational control and finish fencing off the southwest border of the United States.<sup>54</sup> But the conservative notion of needing to build a wall to fix supposedly lax border security is misleading. In fact, according to the measure of U.S. Border Patrol apprehensions, unauthorized immigration attempts on the southwest border have decreased 36 percent over the past two years.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, the U.S. government has been largely successful in militarizing the southern border, investing nearly \$18 billion in on-the-ground infrastructure, technology, and security measures in 2012, and successfully erecting nearly 650 miles of fencing on the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>56</sup>

Taken together, these policies amount to a costly strategy by conservative lawmakers that would make life harder for the millions of unauthorized immigrants living in this country today. Such piecemeal policies overtly target and criminalize large swaths of the immigrant population, while giving individuals no opportunity to come forward to live within the law.

# Progressive solutions for immigration reform

It has now been two years since the Senate passed its bipartisan comprehensive immigration bill, yet the lives of millions of unauthorized immigrants still remain on hold. However, if progressive proposals for immigration reform become law, millions of these individuals would be on their way to permanent legal status and citizenship, and the U.S. economy would see huge gains.

## Federal solutions

The benefits of comprehensive immigration reform, including granting legal status and a pathway to citizenship, are innumerable at both the state and national levels. Comprehensive immigration reform has obvious moral and social benefits: It would keep families from being torn apart and give immigrant families the opportunity to stay in their country of choice and become full and equal members of society. But in refusing to take up comprehensive immigration reform, Congress is not only harming these families, but also hurting the economic health of the United States. The economic and fiscal benefits of comprehensive immigration reform are numerous. For one, it would result in a significant increase in GDP—adding \$1.2 trillion over 10 years, as well as a modest increase in job creation.<sup>57</sup>

TABLE 1  
Economic benefits of comprehensive immigration reform for states, over 10 years

State	Cumulative increase in gross state product	Cumulative increase in earnings of state residents	Cumulative increase in earnings of undocumented workers	Average number of jobs created annually
Alabama	\$6,640,000,000	\$4,271,000,000	\$3,560,000,000	1,000
Arizona	\$23,100,000,000	\$15,300,000,000	\$12,700,000,000	3,400
Arkansas	\$4,200,000,000	\$2,500,000,000	\$2,100,000,000	600
California*	\$211,700,000,000	\$115,000,000,000	\$95,800,000,000	30,700
Colorado	\$15,800,000,000	\$9,100,000,000	\$7,600,000,000	2,300
Connecticut	\$12,100,000,000	\$6,800,000,000	\$5,700,000,000	1,800
Delaware	\$3,600,000,000	\$1,400,000,000	\$1,100,000,000	500

State	Cumulative increase in gross state product	Cumulative increase in earnings of state residents	Cumulative increase in earnings of undocumented workers	Average number of jobs created annually
Florida	\$55,300,000,000	\$37,800,000,000	\$31,500,000,000	8,000
Georgia	\$44,100,000,000	\$26,100,000,000	\$21,800,000,000	6,400
Hawaii	\$3,300,000,000	\$1,700,000,000	\$1,400,000,000	500
Idaho	\$1,500,000,000	\$958,000,000	\$798,000,000	200
Illinois*	\$39,300,000,000	\$21,000,000,000	\$17,500,000,000	5,700
Indiana	\$8,000,000,000	\$4,900,000,000	\$3,700,000,000	1,200
Iowa	\$6,000,000,000	\$3,300,000,000	\$2,800,000,000	900
Kansas	\$4,900,000,000	\$2,700,000,000	\$2,200,000,000	700
Kentucky	\$5,100,000,000	\$3,000,000,000	\$2,500,000,000	700
Louisiana	\$5,700,000,000	\$2,500,000,000	\$2,100,000,000	800
Maryland	\$23,800,000,000	\$15,600,000,000	\$13,000,000,000	3,400
Massachusetts	\$19,100,000,000	\$10,700,000,000	\$8,900,000,000	2,800
Michigan	\$10,200,000,000	\$6,800,000,000	\$5,600,000,000	1,500
Minnesota*	\$6,400,000,000	\$3,700,000,000	\$3,100,000,000	900
Missouri	\$5,100,000,000	\$3,300,000,000	\$2,700,000,000	700
Nebraska*	\$3,000,000,000	\$1,600,000,000	\$1,400,000,000	400
Nevada	\$17,900,000,000	\$9,000,000,000	\$7,500,000,000	2,600
New Hampshire*	\$1,600,000,000	\$337,000,000	\$281,000,000	200
New Jersey	\$50,000,000,000	\$29,900,000,000	\$25,000,000,000	7,200
New Mexico	\$3,800,000,000	\$2,400,000,000	\$2,000,000,000	600
New York	\$58,700,000,000	\$28,000,000,000	\$23,400,000,000	8,500
North Carolina	\$34,700,000,000	\$19,300,000,000	\$16,100,000,000	5,000
Ohio	\$7,600,000,000	\$4,600,000,000	\$3,800,000,000	1,100
Oklahoma	\$4,600,000,000	\$3,100,000,000	\$2,600,000,000	700
Oregon	\$12,600,000,000	\$6,800,000,000	\$5,700,000,000	1,800
Pennsylvania	\$14,800,000,000	\$9,300,000,000	\$7,700,000,000	2,100
Rhode Island	\$2,000,000,000	\$1,200,000,000	\$1,000,000,000	300
South Carolina	\$5,800,000,000	\$3,400,000,000	\$2,900,000,000	800
Tennessee	\$10,200,000,000	\$5,800,000,000	\$4,800,000,000	1,500
Texas	\$144,600,000,000	\$74,700,000,000	\$62,200,000,000	21,000
Utah	\$8,600,000,000	\$4,600,000,000	\$3,800,000,000	1,200
Virginia*	\$16,300,000,000	\$9,600,000,000	\$8,000,000,000	2,400
Washington	\$21,300,000,000	\$12,500,000,000	\$10,400,000,000	3,000
Wisconsin*	\$6,100,000,000	\$3,700,000,000	\$3,100,000,000	900

Notes: The table includes only states for which data are available. Asterisks indicate that state data have been updated from Lynch and Oakford, "National and State-by-State Economic Benefits of Immigration Reform."

Source: Robert Lynch and Patrick Oakford, "National and State-by-State Economic Benefits of Immigration Reform" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2013), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/report/2013/05/17/63295/national-and-state-by-state-economic-benefits-of-immigration-reform/>. The state calculations for benefits of comprehensive immigration reform are based off the following source: Jeffrey Passel and D'Vera Cohn, "Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010" (Washington: Pew Hispanic Center, 2011), available at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/133.pdf>.

In the absence of action on comprehensive immigration reform, President Obama has made moves to fill the holes in the existing immigration system with the expansion of DACA and the creation of DAPA through executive action, announced in November 2014. DAPA would, on a case-by-case basis, grant temporary relief from deportation—or deferred action—and the ability to apply for work authorization to unauthorized individuals who have lived in the United States since 2010 and are parents of U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents. Expanded DACA entails a similar case-by-case screening and granting of deferred action to people who came to the United States at a young age.<sup>58</sup> Through DAPA and expanded DACA, the Obama administration is exercising its prosecutorial discretion to focus enforcement efforts on high-priority cases, while creating a process for low-priority individuals to come forward and apply for this temporary relief.<sup>59</sup>

Since DACA was initiated in 2012, hundreds of thousands of young adult immigrants have successfully become more integrated into the nation’s economic and social institutions.<sup>60</sup> For example, 59 percent of DACA recipients obtained a new job, 57 percent obtained a driver’s license, and 49 percent opened their first bank account.<sup>61</sup> DAPA and DACA expansion would provide an additional 5.2 million eligible unauthorized immigrants reprieve from deportation and give them the ability to work legally on a temporary basis.<sup>62</sup> At the national level, DACA, DAPA, and DACA expansion would create an average of 29,000 jobs annually over 10 years and provide an additional 3.7 million individuals with legal work permits.<sup>63</sup> Allowing these unauthorized immigrants to come off the economic sidelines to live and work without fear of deportation would have both economic and fiscal benefits.

**TABLE 2**  
**Economic benefits of DAPA, DACA, and DACA expansion for states and the District of Columbia, over 10 years**

State	Cumulative increase in state GDP	Cumulative increase in earnings of all state residents	Cumulative increase in earnings of DAPA- and DACA-eligible workers	Average number of jobs created
Arizona	\$6,199,000,000	\$4,053,000,000	\$3,378,000,000	780
Arkansas	\$1,363,000,000	\$736,000,000	\$614,000,000	170
California	\$75,833,000,000	\$39,309,000,000	\$32,758,000,000	9,500
Colorado	\$3,332,000,000	\$2,062,000,000	\$1,719,000,000	420
Connecticut	\$2,914,000,000	\$1,466,000,000	\$1,221,000,000	370
Delaware	\$809,000,000	\$323,000,000	\$269,000,000	100
District of Columbia	\$938,000,000	\$246,000,000	\$205,000,000	120



State	Cumulative increase in state GDP	Cumulative increase in earnings of all state residents	Cumulative increase in earnings of DAPA- and DACA-eligible workers	Average number of jobs created
Florida	\$9,426,000,000	\$6,226,000,000	\$5,188,000,000	1,180
Georgia	\$7,561,000,000	\$4,290,000,000	\$3,575,000,000	950
Hawaii	\$276,000,000	\$136,000,000	\$114,000,000	35
Idaho	\$781,000,000	\$481,000,000	\$401,000,000	100
Illinois	\$14,779,000,000	\$7,981,000,000	\$6,651,000,000	1,850
Indiana	\$1,577,000,000	\$818,000,000	\$682,000,000	200
Iowa	\$765,000,000	\$422,000,000	\$351,000,000	100
Kansas	\$2,094,000,000	\$1,086,000,000	\$905,000,000	260
Kentucky	\$357,000,000	\$209,000,000	\$175,000,000	45
Maryland	\$4,530,000,000	\$2,694,000,000	\$2,245,000,000	570
Massachusetts	\$3,305,000,000	\$1,749,000,000	\$1,457,000,000	410
Michigan	\$1,867,000,000	\$1,189,000,000	\$991,000,000	230
Minnesota	\$1,688,000,000	\$945,000,000	\$787,000,000	210
Nebraska	\$781,000,000	\$378,000,000	\$315,000,000	100
Nevada	\$2,549,000,000	\$1,374,000,000	\$1,145,000,000	320
New Jersey	\$11,979,000,000	\$6,433,000,000	\$5,361,000,000	1,500
New Mexico	\$1,112,000,000	\$670,000,000	\$559,000,000	140
New York	\$16,109,000,000	\$7,381,000,000	\$6,151,000,000	2,020
North Carolina	\$6,588,000,000	\$3,283,000,000	\$2,736,000,000	830
Ohio	\$1,570,000,000	\$837,000,000	\$697,000,000	200
Oklahoma	\$3,259,000,000	\$1,619,000,000	\$1,349,000,000	410
Oregon	\$2,879,000,000	\$1,515,000,000	\$1,263,000,000	360
Pennsylvania	\$2,006,000,000	\$1,219,000,000	\$1,016,000,000	250
Rhode Island	\$507,000,000	\$317,000,000	\$264,000,000	64
South Carolina	\$1,508,000,000	\$968,000,000	\$806,000,000	190
Tennessee	\$2,654,000,000	\$1,452,000,000	\$1,210,000,000	330
Texas	\$38,271,000,000	\$17,576,000,000	\$14,647,000,000	4,800
Utah	\$2,646,000,000	\$1,347,000,000	\$1,123,000,000	330
Virginia	\$4,199,000,000	\$2,642,000,000	\$2,202,000,000	530
Washington	\$3,986,000,000	\$2,244,000,000	\$1,870,000,000	500
Wisconsin	\$1,191,000,000	\$723,000,000	\$602,000,000	150

Note: The state DACA, DAPA, and DACA expansion calculations are based on more recent data on the state undocumented populations than the 2013 comprehensive immigration reform numbers in Figure 1.

Sources: Silva Mathema, "State-By-State Analysis of the Economic Impact of DACA, DAPA, and DACA Expansion," Center for American Progress, June 15, 2015, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2015/06/15/114894/state-by-state-analysis-of-the-economic-impact-of-daca-dapa-and-daca-expansion/>. For more information on the methodology used in this analysis, see Robert Lynch and Patrick Oakford, "The Economic Effects of Granting Legal Status and Citizenship to Undocumented Immigrants" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2013), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/report/2013/03/20/57351/the-economic-effects-of-granting-legal-status-and-citizenship-to-undocumented-immigrants/>.

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## State progress

While congressional leadership remains staunchly opposed to immigration reform, states have countered this tide by establishing more welcoming laws that would help integrate immigrant residents into local communities. Examples of these pro-immigrant integration policies include, but are not limited to:<sup>64</sup>

- **Community policing policies:** Community policing policies and trust laws refer to a broad set of initiatives taken up by several hundred local city and state governments across the country to place limits on the collaboration between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities. These policies are intended to strengthen trust and encourage communication between local law enforcement and immigrant communities because immigrants may otherwise be reluctant to contact the police because of their immigration status.<sup>65</sup>
- **Access to driver's licenses:** Increasingly, a number of states are providing opportunities for unauthorized immigrants to apply for driver's licenses, which would allow millions of people to work and drive safely and legally. Every state now permits applications from DACA recipients.<sup>66</sup> A smaller number of states welcome applications from all unauthorized immigrants.<sup>67</sup>
- **Municipal identification card programs:** Several cities across the country allow residents, regardless of immigration status, to obtain municipal identity cards. These resident cards may not be used for federal purposes but can be used locally to access services from medical clinics, financial institutions, libraries, and a variety of city agencies.<sup>68</sup>
- **Education and tuition-equity laws:** A federal law passed in 1996 restricts states' ability to allow unauthorized students access to postsecondary education benefits. But a number of states have increasingly countered this movement by offering higher education admission and in-state tuition to unauthorized students, starting with Texas in 2001.<sup>69</sup>

TABLE 3

## Pro-immigrant laws in states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico

State	Driver's licenses for DACA recipients	Driver's licenses for unauthorized immigrants*	In-state tuition	Financial aid
Alabama	✓			
Alaska	✓			
Arizona	✓			
Arkansas	✓			
California	✓	✓	✓	✓
Colorado	✓	✓	✓	
Connecticut	✓	✓	✓	
Delaware	✓			
District of Columbia	✓	✓		
Florida	✓			
Georgia	✓			
Hawaii	✓			
Idaho	✓			
Illinois	✓	✓	✓	✓
Indiana	✓			
Iowa	✓			
Kansas	✓		✓	
Kentucky	✓			
Louisiana	✓			
Maine	✓			
Maryland	✓	✓	✓	
Massachusetts	✓			
Michigan	✓			
Minnesota	✓		✓	✓
Mississippi	✓			
Missouri	✓			
Montana	✓			
Nebraska	✓		✓	
Nevada	✓	✓		
New Hampshire	✓			
New Jersey	✓		✓	

State	Driver's licenses for DACA recipients	Driver's licenses for unauthorized immigrants*	In-state tuition	Financial aid
New Mexico	✓	✓	✓	✓
New York	✓		✓	
North Carolina	✓			
North Dakota	✓			
Ohio	✓			
Oklahoma	✓			
Oregon	✓	✓	✓	
Pennsylvania	✓			
Puerto Rico	✓	✓		
Rhode Island	✓			
South Carolina	✓			
South Dakota	✓			
Tennessee	✓			
Texas	✓		✓	✓
Utah	✓	✓	✓	
Vermont	✓	✓		
Virginia	✓			
Washington	✓	✓	✓	✓
West Virginia	✓			
Wisconsin	✓			
Wyoming	✓			

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\* These classes of driver's licenses differ by state. For more detailed information, see Mathema, "Providing Identification to Unauthorized Immigrants."

While Congress refuses to take up a comprehensive immigration reform bill and conservatives at every level of government enact policies that demonize the entire immigrant population, the lives of millions remain on hold at the same time that the United States forfeits huge economic gains. But there are commonsense policies to address these problems: From DAPA, DACA, and DACA expansion at the federal level to community policing programs, education-equity laws, and more at the state level, progressive immigration solutions would benefit all Americans.

# Conclusion

The United States is a country built by immigrants. But the current immigration system has become too focused on aggressive deportation strategies, tearing families apart while forcing millions of immigrants to remain on the economic sidelines. Given the growing demographic and electoral power of immigrant communities, the actions of policymakers on immigration issues matter greatly, particularly as the 2016 election draws closer. The benefits of progressive immigration policies are clear: Implementing DAPA, DACA, and DACA expansion—as well as granting legal status and a pathway to citizenship for the millions of immigrants living in this country—would increase GDP, raise wages, and create jobs, all while preventing families from being torn apart. Yet conservative lawmakers in Washington and across the country continuously fail to act, instead doing all they can to thwart any progress on reforms and passing piecemeal laws that are aimed at demonizing the entire immigrant community. Every day that conservative lawmakers keep their backs turned on a rational path forward for immigration reform, the nation misses out on significant economic benefits, and the lives of millions of families remain on hold.

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